

The Wholemeal Sandwich

I had been in intensive care for over two weeks having multiple transfusions trying to replace over four litres of blood following an operation that had gone drastically wrong.

During this entire two weeks, I was not only having blood transfusions but also intravenous fluids. I was not interested in eating, nor was I allowed. Medical staff needed to have me constantly prepared for further urgent surgery.

Eventually, the staff did not know what else to do. I guess they figured that I had had been given a lot of blood and I should improve. I was transferred back to the general ward.

After 24 hours, I was given permission to eat a little.

It was the most beautifully presented wholemeal sandwich. She was overflowing with sweet baked pumpkin, roasted eggplant, green capsicum, fresh bean sprouts, alfalfa, tasty cheese, baby spinach leaves, beetroot, and hummus. My goodness - the sensations of smelling, touching, and tasting this food were exquisite. I savoured every mouthful. I have never felt so present to food.

Several hours later, they prepared me to go home. I was so excited, and my darling husband was obviously thrilled and clearly exhausted. They asked me to sit on the side of the bed to prepare for the wheelchair. I remember feeling dizzy and I simply collapsed unconscious.

I was still bleeding heavily. I was rushed by ambulance to a major teaching hospital. I was being prepped for this emergency surgery at 12 midnight - I could see and hear the clicking clock in the operating theatre. My body was very intensely shaking and yet I was calmly watching all of this happen. The very grumpy old head anaesthetist looked directly at me with kind eyes, and he very gently held my trembling arm while he was literally yelling at other staff to prioritise this particular surgery and get themselves organised. I knew I could well die.

I decided in the seconds before I went under again that my beautiful husband, son, daughter and grandchildren and my own patients would eventually be all right. Well, in truth, I was still a bit worried about my son and I hoped that I might survive - mainly for him. I thought about the very many gifts I had received in my life and - in the very last micro moments - I reconnected with the delights of that divine wholemeal sandwich.